

Boost Engagement: The Impact of Caption Length on Social Media Posts

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Abstract:

Social media managers are continually seeking ways to boost engagement with their online content, but the captions added to content or posts have received little attention. This paper examines the specific influence of the easily customizable caption length on engagement. Based on a preregistered study with 75,000 social media posts from almost 1,000 influencers we found that the influence of text length is not linear, as assumed in the existing literature, but follows a complex S-shape. The relationship between caption length and engagement is characterized by an initial decline with a local minimum, followed by a surge to a local maximum, which in our data even outperforms very short captions. Context effects for videos (v. images) or ad/sponsored posts change the s shape and hence the local optima. We explore the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Keywords: Social Media, Optimal Captions, Engagement

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media